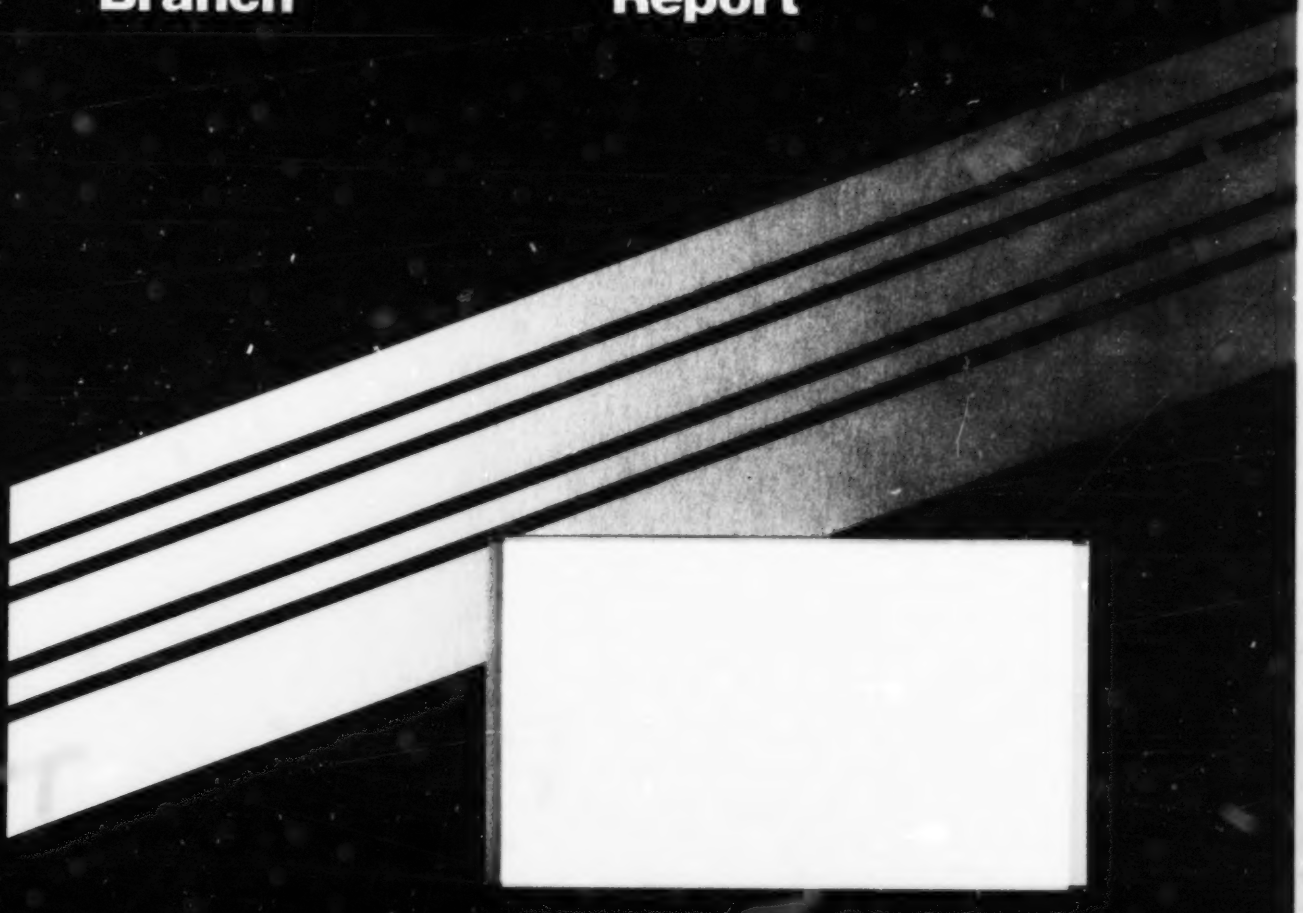
Programs Branch User Report



Solicitor General Canada
Ministry Secretariat

#1984-52

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE CANADIAN URBAN VICTIMIZATION SURVEY: EDMONTON

BY

STATISTICS DIVISION

This working paper was prepared by the Statistics Division, Programs Branch, Ministry of the Solicitor General. This report may not be published, cited or reproduced without permission of the Ministry.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE CANADIAN URBAN VICTIMIZATION SURVEY: EDMONTON

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (1982) provides us with the most extensive Canadian information yet produced concerning the extent of reported and unreported crime during 1981, the impact of criminal victimization, public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system and several other important concerns.[1]

To develop a methodology for conducting victimization surveys in Canada, three major pretests were conducted. The initial pretest was conducted in Edmonton and had, as its primary purpose, a comparison of personal and telephone interviewing techniques. The results of the Edmonton study indicated that data collected over the telephone were comparable to data obtained by the far more costly method of in-person interviews. The second pretest was conducted in Hamilton to test and to refine the telephone interviewing procedures. This research led to the telephone interviewing procedures used in the final pre-test, the Greater Vancouver Victimization Survey (1979).

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey was conducted in early 1982 by Statistics Canada interviewers. Telephone interviews were held with large representative samples of residents[2] aged 16 and older in seven urban centres: Greater Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's.[3] Because of the very low incidence of some types of crime (such as sexual assault), very large samples are required to ensure that enough cases are "caught" to be statistically representative of all actual cases

---

1 The five major themes addressed in the survey include;
a) the extent and distribution of certain crimes;
b) the risk of criminal victimization;
c) the impact of criminal victimization;
d) public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system;
e) victims' perceptions and need.

2 The survey excluded commercial and institutional telephones.

3 A full description of each area is given in Appendix A.

in the community under study. Sample sizes ranged from 6,910 in one city to 9,563 in another, with 61,050 interviews completed overall. On the basis of these interviews, statistical estimates were made for the general population 16 and over in the seven cities. These statistically derived estimates for the population are used throughout this report.

Victimization surveys can give us information about most, but not all types of crimes which are of major concern to the general public. Crimes such as murder, kidnapping, crimes against commerical establishments and "victimless crimes" cannot be captured using survey techniques, and were therefore excluded.

The eight categories of crimes included in this survey are: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and entry, motor vehicle theft, theft of personal property, theft of household property and vandalism. These offences are ranked in descending order of seriousness.

Definitions and Limitations

1. Sexual assault includes rape, attempted rape, molesting or attempted molestation, and is considered the most serious crime.

2. Robbery occurs if something is taken and the offender has a weapon or there is a threat or an attack. The presence of a weapon is assumed to imply a threat. Attempted robberies are also included in this offence category.

3. Assault involves the presence of a weapon or an attack or threat. Assault incidents may range from face-to-face verbal threats to an attack with extensive injuries.

4. Break and enter occurs if a dwelling is entered by someone who has no right to be there. "No right to be there" differentiates, for example, between a workman who is in a dwelling with the permission of the owner and steals something, and someone illegally entering the dwelling to take property. The latter would be classified as a break and enter as are attempts to enter a dwelling if there is some evidence of force or knowledge of how the person tried to get in.

5. Motor vehicle theft involves the theft or attempted theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle or other motor vehicle.

6. Theft or attempted theft of money or other personal property (not household property).

7. Theft or attempted theft of household property.

8. Vandalism occurs if property is damaged but not taken.

Incidents which involved the commission of several different criminal acts appear in the tables only once, according to the most serious component of the event. Thus for example, if sexual assault, theft of money and vandalism all occurred at the same time, the incident would be classified in these tables as sexual assault. An incident would be classified as vandalism (least serious on the hierarchy) only if no other crime which is higher on the seriousness scale occurred at the same time.

Analyses in this report are based on the general offence categories outlined above. At a later date it will be possible to make more refined distinctions between and within offence categories according to other factors such as: whether the incident was only attempted or completed; amount of damage, injury or financial loss incurred; type of weapon used; response of victims; location and time of offence; number of offenders; number of victims; characteristics of offenders; characteristics of victims.

Uniform Crime Reports and Victimization Surveys

One of the persistent problems faced by law enforcers, policy makers and researchers alike has been the inability to determine the "true" incidence and distribution of crime in the community. Although Uniform Crime Reports now provide national statistics which are based upon standardized definitions of crimes and standardized counting procedures, a significant gap still exists between the number of cases recorded in these reports, and the so-called "dark" number of actual crimes.

It is now well recognized that there are two levels of decision-making which affect U.C.R. statistics. On the first level, victims or witnesses must decide whether to report or not to report given incidents to police. Then, if a report is made, police officials in turn must decide whether the incident in question warrants being recorded as a crime or not. Complex decision-making processes are in play at both levels of this screening process. We know that there are regional and inter-category variations in victim and witness reporting practices, and in police recording practices, but until now we have been unable to measure these differences with assurance.

Data obtained from victimization surveys provide an important complement to official police statistics because they address the issue of "dark" number of actual crimes directly. Victims are asked to describe both reported and unreported incidents, and to give their reasons for non-reporting.[4] Such information allows us to develop historical and cross regional estimates of reporting rates, allows some measure of how victims define incidents, and generally provides us with a better understanding of the functioning of the criminal justice system from the perspective of the victim.

---

[4] Two of the special problems of victimization studies, the problems of "series crimes" and of "telescoping" are both concerned to some extent with the vagaries of memory and recall. These questions are discussed briefly in Appendix B.

It is important to note, however, that these survey findings are not meant to replace Uniform Crime Reports, since they are clearly less comprehensive than the U.C.R. in some important respects. As mentioned earlier, certain crimes such as murder or white collar crime cannot be captured using survey techniques and are therefore omitted, and the range of victims is similarly restricted. In the present survey, for example, incidents involving victims who live in rural areas, victims who have no telephones or victims who are under 16 years of age are excluded. Similarly, our data include crimes committed against residents of the seven urban centres wherever these crimes may have occurred, but do not include crimes against non-residents (tourists or commuters) which may have occurred while they were in the city.

Reported and Unreported Incidents

This survey shows that the type of personal victimization most commonly experienced in the seven cities during 1981 was theft of personal property, followed by assault, robbery and sexual assault. The most frequent household victimization was theft of household property, followed by break and enter and vandalism. There were relatively fewer motor vehicle thefts (see Table 1).

Police were not officially made aware of well over half of the incidents described to interviewers, and this fact is consistent with the findings of other large-scale victimization surveys in Canada and elsewhere. Of equal interest and importance, however, is the fact that the proportion of unreported incidents varies significantly by type of offences (Table 1 and 2). The crime most likely to be reported to police was theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle (70% of all incidents were reported), the crime least likely to be reported was theft or attempted theft of personal property (only 30% reported).

The most common reasons for failure to report an offence were that the incident was "too minor" (mentioned in two-thirds of the incidents in which no report was made); that "police could do nothing about it anyway" (61%); and that "it was too inconvenient" to make a report or victims "did not want to take the time" (24%) (Table 3).[5] This table shows that the findings for Edmonton are broadly similar to those obtained when results from the seven cities are combined. Females have a higher reporting rate than males overall, particularly regarding sexual assault, robbery and assault. Generally speaking, those 65 and over are more likely to report incidents than are younger victims.

Risk of Victimization

When incidents are divided into the two general categories of personal offences and household offences it is possible to calculate rates per thousand population or per thousand households.[6] Table 4 shows that 70.3 incidents of personal theft per thousand population occurred in the seven cities studied, and that the more serious the type of incidents, the less likely it was to occur. Sex differences are considerable for each category. Not surprisingly, women are seven times more likely than men to be victims of sexual assault (including rape, attempted rape, sexual molesting and attempted sexual molesting), but they are also more likely than men to be victims of personal theft. Men are almost twice as likely as women to be victims of robbery or assault (see Table 4).

---

5 Percentages do not add to 100 since victims could give more than one reason for failure to report any one incident.

6 Due to low sample numbers in some categories, caution must be exercised in comparing rates marked with a single asterisk (*). Rates marked with two asterisks (**) are based on 10 or fewer sample cases and are consequently statistically unreliable. They are given here for illustrative purposes only, and should not be quoted.

Edmonton had the second highest rate of sexual assault (4.1 per 1,000 population), but the incident rates for all other crime categories were not exceptional as compared to the other cities (see Table 5).

Risk of victimization is closely tied to age. Those under 25 had the highest rate of victimization in all categories of personal offences, and these high rates decline rapidly with increasing age after this point (Table 6). Age-related incident rates for Edmonton are given in Table 7.

Perceptions of Crime: Concerns and Fears

A number of questions were asked concerning respondents' feelings of safety while walking alone during the day and at night, and about their perceptions of crime levels and trends in their neighbourhood and in their city.

On a national level, the vast majority (95%) stated that they felt safe or very safe walking alone during the day, and 5% said they felt somewhat unsafe or very unsafe (see Tables 8 and 9). For all cities between 91 and 98% of the residents said they felt safe.

After dark, fewer people felt safe walking alone in their own neighbourhoods (60%), but they still form a distinct majority. The proportion who felt safe after dark ranged from 51 to 69% for the seven cities.

Edmonton was close to the national average with 97% feeling safe during the day and 58% feeling safe after dark.

A large majority thought the level of crime in their own neighbourhood was average (31%), or low (50%). By contrast, only 12% thought that the level of crime in their neighbourhood was high

(Table 10). Those who had been victimized during 1981 had less positive opinions about the local crime situation (18% thought the level of crime was high), but 78% still rated their neighbourhood as having average or low levels. Understandably, more victims than non-victims also perceived that the crime problem in their neighbourhood was "serious" (Table 11), but a surprising 70% still said that the crime problem was not serious.

Compared to the national findings, fewer Edmonton residents (7% overall, 11% of victims) thought their neighbourhood crime levels were high, and the proportion who said there was a serious crime problem in their neighbourhood was 5-6% lower than the average for all victim status categories.

Perceptions of Police Performance

Residents of the seven cities were more likely than not to give police an "average" or "good" rating on law enforcement, promptness in responding to calls, approachability and provision of information to public on ways to reduce crime. In all categories, victims were more likely to give poor ratings than were non-victims, and overall least satisfaction was expressed with regard to information supplied on crime prevention (Tables 14 and 15).

Perceptions of Police Case-Handling

Eighty-two percent of the victims who contacted the police rated them as average or good in their overall handling of the case (range 71-88% in all seven cities), but 30% of these victims gave police a poor rating in keeping them informed about the progress of the case. Least likely to be satified were the victims of sexual assault and robbery. Although a full 24% of Edmonton victims said police were poor at keeping them informed about the progress of their case, this is a lower proportion than in any other city (Tables 16 and 17).

Awareness and Use of Crime Prevention Programs

Most residents in the seven cities had some awareness of Block Parents programs (73%) and Operation Identification (51%), but less than half (42%) had heard of Neighbourhood Watch. As the ranges indicate, proportions aware of each program varied widely from city to city (Table 18).

The proportion who participated in Operation Identification varied from 4% in one city (where awareness of the program was also very low), to a high of 26% in the city with the highest level of awareness of the program. In all cities, victims were more likely to be aware of each program than non-victims, and to participate in Operation Identification.

Awareness of Crime Compensation Programs

Criminal injuries compensation programs were not well known or well understood by victims or the general public (Table 19). This general lack of knowledge even extended to those few victims (0.7% of the population) who sought medical or dental treatment as the result of injuries received, and who might therefore have been eligible for compensation in any of the provinces concerned. Among the minority who did claim knowledge about the scheme, misinformation about eligiblity was commonplace.

TABLE 1

Seven Cities

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF SELECTED TYPES AND PROPORTION NOT REPORTED TO POLICE

Type of Incident	Number of Incidents	Percent of All Incidents	Percent Unreported
Sexual Assault	17,217	1.1	61.5
Robbery	49,327	3.1	55.1
Assault	285,739	17.8	65.5
Break & Enter	227,447	14.2	36.0
Motor Vehicle Theft	40,645	2.5	29.6
Personal Theft	349,893	21.9	70.6
Household Theft	417,274	26.1	55.5
Vandalism	213,089	13.3	65.3
TOTAL	1,600,675	100.0	58.5

TABLE 2

Edmonton

REPORTED AND UNREPORTED INCIDENTS BY TYPE OF INCIDENT

	Unreported		Reported		Total Incidents
	N	%	N	%	
Sexual Assault	1,422	85.2	247	14.8	1,670
Robbery	2,015	53.5	1,754	46.5	3,769
Assault	15,695	68.4	7,241	31.6	23,177
Break & Enter	6,399	38.0	10,458	62.0	17,032
Motor Vehicle Theft	784	23.1	2,600	76.8	3,406
Personal Theft	20,356	70.2	8,629	29.8	29,121
Household Theft	21,634	53.9	18,523	46.1	40,601
Vandalism	10,399	61.4	6,530	38.6	17,044
TOTAL	78,704	58.4	55,982	41.6	135,819

For a very small proportion of cases it was not known whether police were made aware of the incident or not. These cases were ommitted from the percentage calculations for this table.

TABLE 3

REASONS GIVEN FOR FAILURE TO REPORT INCIDENTS TO POLICE

	Proportion of Non-Report Victims Giving Each Reason	
	Edmonton	Seven Cities
Nothing Taken	20.9	19.4
Police Couldn't Do Anything	60.5	61.1
Fear of Revenge	4.6	4.4
Protect Offender	6.0	6.5
Too Minor	62.1	65.7
Inconvenience/Too Much Time	22.2	24.2
Personal Matter Only	15.2	13.3
Reported to Another Official	12.1	11.8
Concern About Attitude of Police and Courts	6.1	8.1
Overall % Unreported In	58.4	58.5

Columns do not add to 100% since respondents could indicate more than one reason for failure to report any one incident.

TABLE 4

Seven Cities

INCIDENT RATES

Personal Offences

Total population age 16 and older in seven cities = 4,975,904

Type of Incident	N	Rates per 1000 Population		
		Total	Males	Females
Sexual Assaults	17,217	3.5	0.8	5.8
Robbery	49,372	10.0	13.3	7.2
Assault	285,739	57.4	79.1	39.3
Personal Theft	349,893	70.3	66.5	74.0

Household Offences

Total households in seven cities = 2,424,902

Type of Incident	N	Rates per 1000 Households
Break and Enter	227,447	93.8
Motor Vehicle Theft	40,645	16.8
Household Theft	417,274	172.1
Vandalism	213,089	87.9

TABLE 5

Edmonton

INCIDENT RATES

Personal Offences

Total population age 16 and older in Edmonton = 404,505

Type of Incident	N	Rates per 1000 Population		
		Total	Males	Females
Sexual Assaults	1,670	4.1	1.4**	6.5
Robbery	3,769	9.3	12.2	6.8
Assault	23,177	57.3	79.9	37.5
Personal Theft	29,121	72.0	74.2	69.8

Household Offences

Total households in Edmonton = 198,601

Type of Incident	N	Rates per 1000 Households
Break and Enter	17,032	85.8
Motor Vehicle Theft	3,406	17.2
Household Theft	40,601	204.4
Vandalism	17,044	85.8

** Rates are based on 10 or fewer sample cases and are consequently statistically unreliable. They are given here for illustrative purposes only and should not be quoted.

TABLE 6

Seven Cities

INCIDENT RATES PER THOUSAND POPULATION BY AGE CATEGORY

	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-64	65+
Sexual Assault	6.2*	14.4	6.4	3.3	2.7	0.6**	0.8**	1.1**	0.2**
Robbery	23.8	22.1	19.0	11.3	7.4	5.0	3.8	7.7*	3.9
Assault	130.6	141.8	107.4	78.9	49.8	25.8	13.9	16.1	7.5
Personal Theft	156.2	138.9	122.1	85.8	64.2	48.0	30.5	27.3	13.2

_____ Highest rate for each offence category.

* Low sample numbers in this category mean that caution should be exercised when interpreting this rate.

** Rates are based on 10 or fewer sample cases and are consequently statistically unreliable. They are given here for illustrative purposes only, and should not be quoted.

TABLE 7

Edmonton

INCIDENT RATES PER THOUSAND POPULATION BY AGE CATEGORY

	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-64	65+
Sexual Assault	10.6**	7.4**	7.1*	4.9**	3.3**	0.5**	0**	0**	0**
Robbery	26.4**	13.1**	12.3	11.4*	6.2*	5.2**	10.2**	3.5**	0**
Assault	138.4	93.7	101.9	65.5	48.2	19.8	15.2*	20.6**	4.6**
Personal Theft	185.4	120.4	103.9	80.8	65.1	40.8	25.2	9.2**	14.1**

_____ Highest rate for each offence category.

* Low sample numbers in this category mean that caution should be exercised when interpreting this rate.

** Rates are based on 10 or fewer sample cases and are consequently statistically unreliable. They are given here for illustrative purposes only, and should not be quoted.

TABLE 8

Edmonton

FEELINGS OF SAFETY WALKING ALONE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD

	During Day	After Dark
	%	%
Safe	97	58
Unsafe	3	42
TOTAL	100	100

TABLE 9

Seven Cities

FEELINGS OF SAFETY WALKING ALONE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD

	During Day	After Dark
	%	%
Safe	95	60
Unsafe	5	40
TOTAL	100	100

TABLE 10

Seven Cities

PERCEPTIONS OF LEVEL OF CRIME IN OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD BY POPULATION AND BY VICTIM STATUS

	Percentage Distribution		
Amount of Crime	Population	Non-Victims	Victims
High	12	9	18
Average	31	28	36
Low	50	54	42
Don't Know	7	9	5
TOTAL	100	100	100

TABLE 11

Seven Cities

PERCEPTIONS OF SERIOUSNESS OF CRIME PROBLEM IN OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD BY POPULATION AND BY VICTIM STATUS

	Percentage Distribution		
	Population	Non-Victims	Victims
Serious	17	13	25
Not Serious	77	80	70
Don't Know	6	7	4
TOTAL	100	100	100

TABLE 12

Edmonton

PERCEPTIONS OF LEVEL OF CRIME IN OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD BY POPULATION AND BY VICTIM STATUS

	Percentage Distribution		
Amount of Crime	Population	Non-Victims	Victims
High	7	5	11
Average	30	26	35
Low	57	62	49
Don't Know	6	7	5
TOTAL	100	100	100

TABLE 13

Edmonton

PERCEPTIONS OF SERIOUSNESS OF CRIME PROBLEM IN OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD BY POPULATION AND BY VICTIM STATUS

	Percentage Distribution		
	Population	Non-Victims	Victims
Serious	13	9	19
Not Serious	82	85	77
Don't Know	5	5	4
TOTAL	100	100	100

TABLE 14

Seven Cities

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE BY POPULATION AND BY VICTIM STATUS

How Good Are Local Police At:	Good	Average	Poor	Don't Know	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Enforcing the Laws					
Population	58	28	6	8	100
Non-Victims	61	25	5	9	100
Victims	53	33	8	6	100
Responding Promptly to Calls					
Population	49	16	8	26	100
Non-Victims	50	15	6	29	100
Victims	48	20	13	19	100
Being Approachable and Easy to Talk To					
Population	62	16	6	16	100
Non-Victims	63	13	4	19	100
Victims	61	20	9	11	100
Supplying Crime Reduction Information					
Population	41	21	17	20	100
Non-Victims	43	20	15	23	100
Victims	39	24	22	15	100

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 15

Edmonton

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE BY POPULATION AND BY VICTIM STATUS

How Good Are Local Police At:	Good	Average	Poor	Don't Know	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Enforcing the Laws					
Population	55	33	5	6	100
Non-Victims	58	31	4	7	100
Victims	51	37	8	5	100
Responding Promptly to Calls					
Population	44	20	10	26	100
Non-Victims	44	19	7	30	100
Victims	44	20	15	21	100
Being Approachable and Easy to Talk To					
Population	62	18	6	15	100
Non-Victims	62	17	4	17	100
Victims	60	20	9	11	100
Supplying Crime Reduction Information					
Population	53	22	11	14	100
Non-Victims	54	20	10	15	100
Victims	50	24	14	12	100

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 16

Seven Cities

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE CASE HANDLING

	Aspects of Police Behaviour			
Victim's Rating	Promptness	Courtesy	Keeping Informed	Overall Handling
	%	%	%	%
Good	75	73	51	58
Average	13	22	19	24
Poor	12	5	30	17
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

TABLE 17

Edmonton

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE CASE HANDLING

	Aspects of Police Behaviour			
Victim's Rating	Promptness	Courtesy	Keeping Informed	Overall Handling
	%	%	%	%
Good	71	82	53	63
Average	16	14	23	23
Poor	13	4	24	15
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 18

Seven Cities

AWARENESS OF CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

	% Aware of Program			% Participating
	Neighbourhood Watch	Block Parents	Operation Identification	Operation Identification
Victims	46	78	60	18
Non-Victims	40	71	47	14
Population Range	42 (23-84)	73 (62-92)	51 (30-82)	15 (4-26)
Edmonton				
Victims	68	95	65	16
Non-Victims	61	91	56	13
Population	64	92	59	14

TABLE 19

Seven Cities

AWARENESS OF CRIME COMPENSATION PROGRAMS BY VICTIM STATUS

	Victims Requiring Medical or Dental Treatment	Other Victims and Non-Victims
% Aware of Programs	27	24
% Not Aware of Programs	73	76
	100	100
Number of Cases	32,685	4,930,352
% of Population	0.7	99.3

TABLE 20

Edmonton

AWARENESS OF CRIME COMPENSATION PROGRAMS BY VICTIM STATUS

	Victims Requiring Medical or Dental Treatment	Other Victims and Non-Victims
% Aware of Programs	19	22
% Not Aware of Programs	82	78
	100	100
Number of Cases	2,333	401,897
% of Population	0.6	99.4

APPENDIX A

The seven survey centres included in the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (1982) were defined as follows using, in all cases, 1981 boundaries.

Survey Centre	Constituent Municipalities
St. John's*	St. John's (city) Mt. Pearl (town)
Halifax-Dartmouth	Halifax (city) Dartmouth (city)
Montreal	All municipalities located on the Island of Montreal (including Nun's Island)
Toronto	East York (bor) Etobicoke (bor) North York (city) Scarborough (bor) Toronto (city) York (bor)
Winnipeg	Winnipeg (city)
Edmonton*	Edmonton (city)
Greater Vancouver	Belcarra (vl) Burnaby (mun) Coquitlam (mun) Delta (mun) Lion's Bay (vl) New Westminster (city) North Vancouver (mun) North Vancouver (mun) Port Coquitlam (city) Port Moody (city) Surrey (mun) Richmond (mun) University Endowment Area Vancouver (city) West Vancouver (mun) White Rock (city)

The survey centres are defined in this way so as to coincide with local police force jurisdiction as well as to be comparable among themselves. The sole exception is Vancouver which is defined so as to be comparable to the 1979 Greater Vancouver pilot study.

---

* The city boundaries changed as of January 1, 1982. The 1981 city boundaries were employed.

APPENDIX B

Recall of Events

As with all surveys in which respondents are asked to recall past events, data from this victimization survey is subject to errors caused by faulty or incomplete memory. Because respondents are asked to report details on victimizations which may have taken place up to a full year earlier, some degree of inaccurate reporting of detail must be expected. Respondents may forget minor criminal incidents, or may fail to report incidents such as intra-familial assaults because they do not perceive that a criminal incident has occurred.

"Telescoping"

One particular type of recall phenomenon affecting victimization surveys is that of "telescoping" - the tendency of respondents to misplace events in time. The most problematic of various types of telescoping would be forward telescoping - the reporting of an incident which occurred prior to the reference period as occurring during the reference period. Although the extent of forward telescoping that occurred in this survey is unknown, the fact that a definite, well-defined reference period - January 1, 1981 to December 31, 1981, was employed and emphasized would have helped to minimize this effect. Backward telescoping - (reporting an event as occurring during the reference period when, in fact, it occurred after the end of the reference period) - would not have been a significant factor since the survey was conducted in the weeks almost immediately following the end of the reference period.

"Series" Crimes

Another type of recall problem sometimes occurs, particularly if a respondent has been the victim of several (usually five or more) similar incidents, and is unable to clearly recall the details of each. While series crimes tend to be minor incidents they are significant because of their frequency and because they are often a feature of the every-day lives of some victims. There seems to be no completely satisfactory method of dealing with this problem.[1] In this report, series incidents are counted as one incident in the estimates for crimes. A separate report will focus on "series" victims.

---

[1] The most comprehensive and useful account of these problems can be found in Wesley G. Skogan, Issues in the Measurement of Victimization, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (NCJ-74682), 1981: 19-24.